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Allah-Consciousness or Heedfulness of Allah

The Term *Taqwaa*

The conventional translation of the term *taqwaa* as fear of Allah does not render the positive content of this expression. The term *taqwaa* denotes, among other things, the awareness of Allah's all encompassing knowledge and the desire to mould one's existence, in the light of this awareness. Hence, the interpretation adopted by some translators 'guarding oneself against evil', 'carefulness of one's duty', or 'guarding oneself extraordinarily from what would harm him in the life of the world to come', etc. does not give more than one particular aspect of the concept of *taqwaa*, or heedfulness of Allah.

The Concept of *Taqwaa*

Taqwaa is one of the most important themes in the Glorious Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. It is in fact the bedrock of religion. In numerous *ahaadeeth*, Allah's Messenger ﷺ advised believers to practise *taqwaa*. In reality, this one characteristic of *taqwaa* combines all of the good of this worldly life and the afterlife.

Lane's Definition of the Term *Taqwaa*

In his monumental work titled *Arabic-English Lexicon*, E. W. Lane defines the term *taqwaa* in the following manner, 'He preserved or guarded himself exceedingly, or extraordinarily, from sin'. It may often be rendered 'he was pious or careful of his religious duties'. (Lane, vol. 2, p. 3059, 2003 Reprint)

The word *taqwaa* is often followed by the Name of Allah, Most High: have *Taqwaa* of Allah. This means that one should protect oneself from Allah's displeasure and punishment. This can only be done by obeying Him. This is the minimum aspect of *taqwaa*. In order to have complete *taqwaa* or protection from Allah's anger, one must perform all the obligatory deeds that he is capable of, and keep away from all of the prohibited acts and matters that one has doubt about. *Taqwaa*, therefore, is to act in obedience to Allah; it is to avoid acts of disobedience of Allah.

In order to attain *taqwaa*, one should protect and carefully keep oneself away from committing *shirk* – associating partners with Allah in worship. One should refrain from the great as well as small sins. One must also avoid disliked works and matters that one doubts.



Satan is your Enemy, so Take him as your Enemy

The activities of Satan are all-pervasive. Man must, therefore, constantly be alert and on his guard. Whenever the human self relaxes its watchfulness, it is liable to be preyed upon by Satan's beguiling although every human is, to some extent and in principle, as it were, exposed to Satan's tempting or beguiling. People who have *taqwaa* do not really lapse into evil, but become quickly aware of Satan's machinations. Thus, the Glorious Qur'an advises, **'Should a prompting from Satan invade you, seek refuge in Allah; Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Those who are on their guard, when a seductive glamour from Satan touches them, they quickly remember [Allah] and thus begin to see things clearly [once again].'** (7: 200-201)

This means that Satan's activity essentially consists in confusing a

person and temporarily clouding his inner thoughts. The Qur'an stresses that, although no human is in principle totally immune from the touch of Satan or devil, he has no sway over those who are on guard against an invasion of their moral integrity. Thus, Allah, Most High makes it very clear to Satan: **'Indeed, upon my servants, you will be able to exercise no influence, but only those errant ones who follow you.'** (15: 42) He also says, **'He has no authority over those who believe and put their faith in their Lord.'** (16: 99)

This shows that Satan's whisperings alone are not strong. It is only man's weakness and lack of moral courage and alertness that makes Satan seem so strong. Satan, in reality, is more cunning and artful than being strong. He is more deceitful and contriving. He is more treacherous and waylaying than giving battle. It, therefore, follows that Satan is not powerful. Man is weak. Satan's master trick is to cause something to look attractive and tempting with the dross of the world as if it were tinsel. This is why he will say, on the Day of Judgement, to those who will accuse him of leading them astray, **'Allah made you a true promise, whereas I made you a false promise. I had no power over you, but only I invited you to error and you accepted my invitation. Do not blame me, but only yourself.'** (14: 22) It is, therefore, Satan's power of each person will differ.

Thus the real problem lies within man himself, because he is a blend of good and evil. He is a blend of ignorance and knowledge. He is a blend of power and impotence. The key to man's defence, therefore, is *taqwaa*. *Taqwaa* literally means defence, and it is a kind of inner light. It is a spiritual spark which man must kindle within himself to distinguish between right and wrong; between truth and falsehood; between seeming real and real; between dross and tinsel, between immediate and lasting. Once a human kindles the spark of *taqwaa* within himself, he should be able to see Satan's footsteps for what they are, and not be deceived by them.

It is reported that Umar ibn al-Khattaab رضي الله عنه once asked the learned companion Ubayy ibn Ka'b about the true meaning of *taqwaa*. Ubayy asked Umar, 'Have you ever taken a path between thorny bushes?' 'Yes, I have,' Umar replied. Ubayy asked again, 'How did you manage to get through it?' Umar replied, 'I gathered up my clothes and tried my best to avoid the thorns.' Ubayy said, 'This is precisely what *taqwaa* is.'



- ✍ Give the meaning of *taqwaa* in the words of E. W. Lane.
- ✍ What does it mean 'to have *taqwaa* of Allah'?
- ✍ What should we do in order to achieve *taqwaa*?
- ✍ What do people who have *taqwaa* do when tempted by Satan?
- ✍ What is the true nature of Satan?
- ✍ What did Ubayy ibn Ka'b compare *taqwaa* to?

Taqwaa in Action

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah's Messenger ﷺ once came upon a stack of food, and he inserted his hand in it. When his fingers reached something moist, he turned to the food-merchant and asked, 'What is this, O Food-merchant?' The Food-merchant replied, 'It has been affected by the rain, Messenger of Allah.' Thereupon, Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Then why did you not put it on top of the stack so that people can see it? He who defrauds us is not of us.' (Muslim)

A Word of Caution Regarding Taqwaa

Taqwaa signifies in Arabic a state of mind and heedfulness. A pious person thinks carefully before taking any action. He sees first whether his act is permitted by the *sharee'ah* or not. This reference to the *sharee'ah* at every step is a pointer to one's *taqwaa*. Thus, *taqwaa* is an outlook; it is an attitude and temperament.

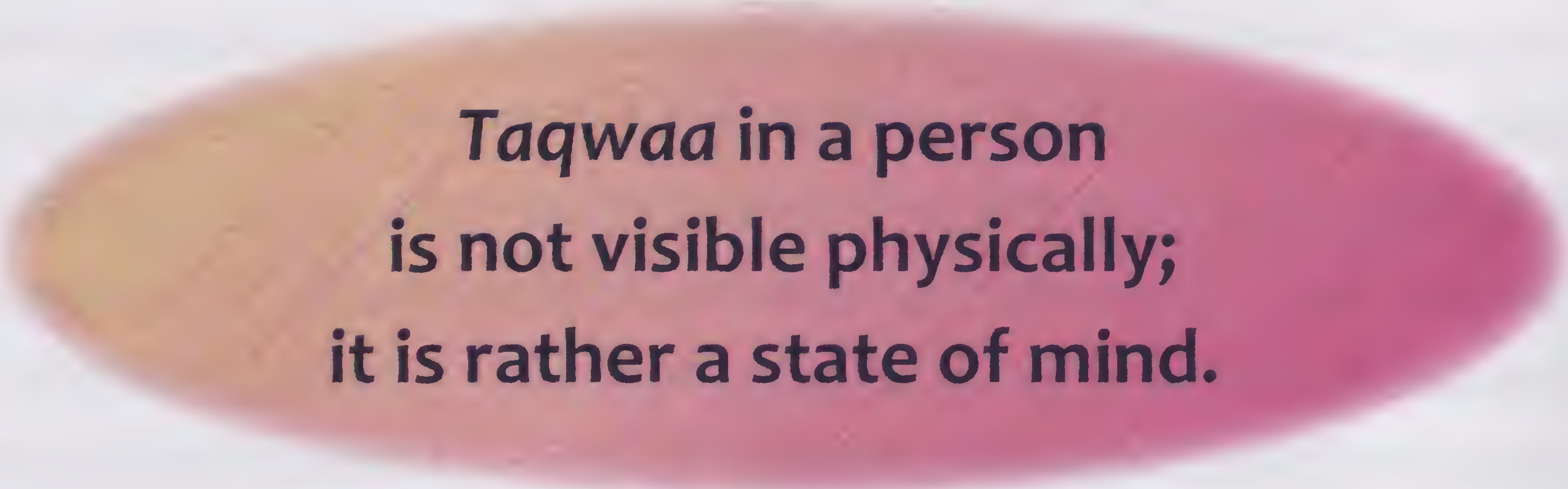
Exercise

A. Fill in the blanks.

1. *Taqwaa* is the _____ of religion.
2. The key to man's defence against evil is _____.
3. No human is immune from the touch of _____.

B. State whether these statements are true (T) or false (F).

1. Satan sways even people who are continually guarding their moral integrity. _____
2. The activities of Satan are not all-pervasive. _____
3. Man's weakness makes Satan seem so strong. _____



***Taqwaa* in a person
is not visible physically;
it is rather a state of mind.**